

## CLAIMS

### WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method to select an agent from a group of agents to service a  
5 contact at a contact center comprising:  
obtaining performance data for each agent in the group of agents;  
representing the performance data on a performance scale for each agent in  
the group of agents;  
comparing the performance data on the performance scale for a first agent  
10 in the group of agents and a second agent in the group of agents; and  
responsive to the comparing step, selecting the first agent to service the  
contact.
2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
15 maintaining a current record of qualifications of each agent in the group of  
agents;  
obtaining contact parameters that describe the contact; and  
comparing at least some portion of the current record of qualifications of at  
least one agent in the group of agents to the contact parameters, and wherein  
20 the selecting step comprises responsive to the comparing the performance  
data step and the comparing qualifications step, selecting the first agent to service  
the contact.
3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the maintaining step comprises:  
25 storing the current record of qualifications of each agent in the group of  
agents in a database on a computer-accessible medium; and  
updating the current record as soon as new qualification data is available,  
and the method further comprises the step of  
accessing the current record of qualifications of the at least one agent in  
30 the group following the updating step, and

the comparing step comprises comparing qualifications accessed in the accessing step to the contact parameters.

4. The method of Claim 3, wherein the qualifications comprise at least one of personality, cognitive ability, and skills and competencies.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the representing step comprises representing the performance data of each agent in the group of agents on a performance scale that comprises at least two performance indicators, and wherein the comparing step further comprises weighing one performance indicator of the at least two performance indicators more heavily than the other performance indicator.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the performance scale comprises at least two performance indicators, and wherein the comparing step further comprises weighing one performance indicator of the at least two performance indicators more heavily than the other performance indicator on the basis of at least one of call volume, management input, operational goals, and compliance statistics.

7. The method of Claim 5, further comprising the step of determining a state of the contact center, and wherein the comparing step further comprises weighing one performance indicator of the at least two performance indicators more heavily than the other performance indicator as a function of the state.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the step of determining a state comprises acquiring current activity from an activity monitor.

9. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of determining a contact center state, and

wherein the comparing step further comprises weighing the performance of the first agent and the second agent on the basis of the contact center state.

10. The method of Claim 9, wherein the step of determining the  
5 contact center state comprises forecasting the contact center state on the basis of historical state, and

wherein the comparing step further comprises weighing the performance of the first agent and the second agent on the basis of the forecasted contact center state.

10

11. The method of Claim 9, wherein the step of determining the contact center state comprises forecasting the contact center state on the basis of a current state, and

15 wherein the comparing step further comprises weighing the performance of the first agent and the second agent on the basis of the forecasted contact center state.

12. The method of Claim 5, wherein the contact is an incoming call.

20

13. The method of Claim 5, wherein the contact is an outbound call.

14. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps recited in Claim 5.

25

15. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of determining a rate of contacts serviced by the contact center, and

wherein the representing step comprises representing the performance data of each agent in the group of agents with a quality metric and a handling time metric, and

30

wherein the comparing step further comprises weighing the quality metric more heavily than the handling time metric if contact rate is essentially below a

threshold and weighing the handling time metric more heavily than the quality metric if contact rate is essentially above the threshold.

16. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of determining  
5 revenue of the contact center, and

wherein the representing step comprises representing the performance data of each agent in the group of agents with a first metric and a second metric, and

wherein the comparing step further comprises weighing the first metric more heavily than the second metric if revenue is essentially below a threshold  
10 and weighing the second metric more heavily than the first metric if revenue is essentially above the threshold.

17. The method of Claim 1, wherein the representing step comprises representing the performance data of each agent in the group of agents on a  
15 performance scale that comprises exactly one performance indicator.

18. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of determining a state of the contact center, and

wherein the representing step comprises representing the performance data  
20 of each agent in the group of agents on a performance scale that comprises exactly one performance indicator, and

wherein the comparing step further comprises choosing the performance indicator on the basis of the contact center state.

25 19. A method to manage operational effectiveness in a contact center comprising:

receiving an indicator value representing agent performance for at least one agent in the contact center;

receiving a value indicating a contact center state;

30 generating an index that is a function of the contact center state value and the indicator value; and

adjusting an operational function in the contact center on the basis of the index.

20. The method of Claim 19, wherein the adjusting step comprises  
5 selecting a resource to deploy in the contact center on the basis of the index.

21. The method of Claim 19, wherein the adjusting step comprises selecting an agent to service a contact on the basis of the agent's index.

10 22. The method of Claim 19, wherein the step of receiving an indicator value comprises receiving a first indicator value and a second indicator value, and wherein the index is a function of the contact center state, the first indicator value, and the second indicator value.

15 23. The method of Claim 19, wherein the index further ranks each agent in the group, and  
wherein the step of receiving an indicator value comprises receiving a first indicator value and a second indicator value, and  
wherein the index is a function of the contact center state, the first  
20 indicator value, and the second indicator value

24. The method of Claim 22, wherein:  
the contact center state comprises a characterization of the center's rate of servicing contacts;  
25 the first indicator represents time-based performance of the at least one agent; and  
the function is operative to weigh the first indicator more heavily when the contact center state is above a threshold than when the contact center state is below the threshold.

25. The method of Claim 22, wherein the determining step comprises forecasting the contact center state using historical data.

26. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable  
5 instructions for performing the steps recited in Claim 19.

27. A system for selecting a first agent over a second agent to perform a task in a contact center, the system comprising:

a first terminal operative to interface with the first agent and a second  
10 terminal operative to interface with the second agent;

an agent performance monitor in communication with the first terminal and the second terminal, the performance monitor operative to determine a first indicator of agent performance and a second indicator of agent performance for the each of the first agent and the second agent;

15 a state monitor operative to determine the state of the contact center; and

a ranking system in communication with the agent performance monitor and the call state monitor, the ranking system operative to:

compute a first index value for the first agent using the state and the first indicator of agent performance;

20 compute a second index value for the second agent using the state and the second indicator of agent performance; and

select the first agent to perform the task because of first index value is one of higher or lower than the second index value.

25 28. The system of Claim 27, wherein the task comprises receiving an incoming call, and the system further comprises a call distribution component in communication with the ranking system, wherein the call distribution component is operative to route the incoming call to the first agent.

29. The system of Claim 27, wherein the state comprises call volume and the function is further operative to increase the index value's dependence on the first indicator in response to increased call volume.

5 30. The system of Claim 27, wherein the index is also a function of management input.

31. The system of Claim 27, wherein the state comprises sales and the function is further operative to increase the index value's dependence on the first  
10 indicator in response to increased sales.

32. The system of Claim 27, wherein the state comprises a management directive and the function is further operative to increase the index value's dependence on the first indicator in response to the management directive.  
15

33. The system of Claim 27, wherein the state comprises compliance statistics and the function is further operative to increase the index value's dependence on the first indicator in response to the compliance statistics.

20 34. A method to select an agent from a group of agents to service a contact at a contact center comprising:

generating a performance indicator for each agent in the group of agents;  
and

25 ranking each agent in the group of agents on the basis of the performance indicator; and

selecting a preferred agent to service the contact on the basis of the preferred agent's rank.

35. The method of Claim 34, further comprising the step of  
30 determining a state of the contact center,

wherein the ranking step comprises weighing the performance indicator for each agent in the group of agents according to the contact center state and ranking each agent in the group of agents on the basis of the weighted performance indicator.

5

36. A method to select an agent from a group of agents to service a contact at a contact center comprising:

generating a performance indicator for each agent in the group of agents;  
and

10        computing an index for each agent in the group of agents using the performance indicator as a computational input, wherein the indices predict each agent's relative contribution to the center's operational effectiveness by servicing the contact; and

15        selecting a preferred agent to service the contact on the basis of the indices.

37. The method of Claim 36, wherein the preferred agent has the highest index in the group of agents.

20        38. The method of Claim 36, wherein the preferred agent is predicted to contribute more to the center's operational effectiveness than each of the other agents in the group.